

## Enlightenment is Not An Altered State (Adyashanti)

Adyashanti explains clearly what enlightenment really is, and what it is not. Mainly, that enlightenment is not an altered state of consciousness as what most people believe. What we perceive every day through the distorted lens of ego is the truly altered state. Enlightenment, on the other hand, is perceiving things as they really are, which is the natural state of consciousness.

Transcript:

Enlightenment is simply not perceiving through ego. It's not seeing life, or anything—self, others, your tennis shoes, your dog, your cat, your livelihood, anything. It's just not seeing the world, not seeing everything through the distortion called the egoic state of consciousness. That is why it's been likened to the natural state.

'Natural' meaning it's not an alternative lens, distorting lens; it's just perception without a lens, without a distortion. Ultimately that's what enlightenment is. It's perception without distortion. Whether it's perceiving the nature of what you think is yourself, which there isn't one. Whether it is perceiving a thought, whether it is perceiving a feeling, whether it is perceiving a situation, whether it's perceiving your relationship—it is simply perceiving not through the lens of ego. That's what enlightenment is.

And it's useful to at least have some basis of understanding in this because an awakening—or in Zen what they call 'satori' experience, seeing beyond the veil itself, seeing without the veil of ego—may be the true perception, the natural perception, the undistorted perception. But what most people want to do is they think enlightenment is like an unending satori experience, an unending enlightenment experience and an unending awakening experience—an unending experience.

In the end enlightenment has very little to do with enlightenment experiences.

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But it's not an unending experience at all. It has nothing to do with an unending experience. That misunderstanding will get you to do more 'tail chasing' than you ever dreamed possible. In the end enlightenment has very little to do with enlightenment experiences. It is simply not perceiving through the lens of ego. That's what it is.

And there's no doubt, it's pretty good not perceiving through the lens of ego. It's happiness. It's peace. It's the end of your search. Not that you find anything, except sanity. Not that you attain anything, except seeing things as they actually are. And that's what 'nirvana' is, seeing things as they actually are.

So when you see things as they naturally are, you see everything is One. And the nature of anything and everything is not nearly as substantial as you thought. It's Nature, it's emptiness. The nature of anything is nothingness. The nature of anything and everything is that it's all insubstantial.

And so this view, though, these aren't some altered states of consciousness, you see. From the enlightened perspective, everything else is an altered state of consciousness. Does that make sense?

Egoic state of consciousness... is a wildly altered state of consciousness.

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Ego is... if you want to have altered states of consciousness, most people are already in one of the more wild altered states of consciousness. It's called egoic state of consciousness. It's a wildly altered state of consciousness. It gets you to perceive things that aren't there. It gets you to see enemies where there aren't any. It gets you to see dualities where there aren't any. It gets you to have things like a self-image when there isn't a 'self' there to begin with. It gets you to have certain thoughts about

yourself when in actuality the only thing that could be called a 'self' at all is simply the thought you have about it.

So if you want altered state of consciousness I'd stick with ego. It's about as advanced as you are going to get. It is existence, you know, doing its damndest, its best job at altering consciousness.

And yet in spirituality somehow, spirituality got associated with altered states of consciousness. You can alter your state of consciousness. Lots of the types of spirituality the people practice, they'll alter your state of consciousness. You can chant God's name for four or five hours, you'll notice your consciousness starts to alter, change. You'll feel different, things will look different. All sorts of things you can do to alter your state of consciousness.

Enlightenment is the unaltered state of consciousness. Consciousness needs no alteration to see that everything is One.

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But the funny thing is, enlightenment has nothing to do with any of that. Enlightenment is the unaltered state of consciousness. Consciousness needs no alteration to see that everything is One. Since everything IS One you don't need the altered state of consciousness to perceive that everything is One. You need the altered state of consciousness to perceive that everything is actually more than One, like two or three or four or five or ten or a thousand.

So in these moments—in Zen they call them satoris, we often call them awakening—in the awakening, the valuable thing about the awakening is how much of the egoic consciousness falls away in the awakening. In the end, the next week or the next month, that's all that's going to matter. Because the experience, the sense of 'Aha!' which you get upon the awakening to your true nature, 'Aha! I thought I was back' but that that I thought I was was just an imagination. What a relief, that's a great 'Aha!' but you're not going to have an 'Aha!' forever, are you?

A week later your 'Aha!' is going to be quite gone. You ever notice that? You have the biggest revelation in the world—'Oh, my God!'—and then a week later, 'yeah, well, you know.' So it's not the quality of the 'Aha!' sustaining because it won't sustain itself, which is great 'cause that means you can always have another one.

The significant thing about those moments though, those satoris or awakening to your true nature, is how much of the egoic consciousness falls away. That's because that's what you're going to live with. That's what's going to be with you the next week, the next month, the next year, maybe the next lifetime.

The egoic state of consciousness actually takes a great amount of energy and a great amount of effort.

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And as to point of orientation or the 'what to focus on', since egoic state of consciousness, duality—seeing things as duality, through the lens of duality—it's actually something that must be constantly maintained. The egoic state of consciousness actually takes a great amount of energy and a great amount of effort. Since it's not true, it has to keep building this falseness constantly. Otherwise, it will end. Because what is not true ends as soon as it's not being fueled. And so illusion or the egoic state of consciousness must constantly be fueled like a fire, or like a coal stove which you must keep shoveling fuel into it.

So the useful spiritual disciplines are simply ways of not putting more energy into egoic consciousness. That's basically what they're doing. Stop fueling it. Stop fueling it and it can't sustain itself.



[Adyashanti](#) (“Adyashanti” means primordial peace) is an American-born spiritual teacher devoted to serving the awakening of all beings. His teachings are an open invitation to stop, inquire, and recognize what is true and liberating at the core of all existence.

Asked to teach in 1996 by his Zen teacher of 14 years, Adyashanti offers teachings that are free of any tradition or ideology. “The Truth I point to is not confined within any religious point of view, belief system, or doctrine, but is open to all and found within all.”

Based in California, Adyashanti lives with his wife, Mukti, Associate Teacher of Open Gate Sangha. He teaches throughout North America and Europe, offering satsangs, weekend intensives, silent retreats, and a live internet radio broadcast.

Open Gate Sangha is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to support the teachings of Adyashanti and Mukti. The organization hosts events throughout the United States and in Europe, publishes books, CDs, and DVDs, and provides access to the teachings online. Open Gate Sangha is run by a small staff and is supported by volunteers who form the heart of the community. For more, visit <http://www.adyashanti.org>.